



OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL

March 3, 2022

Susan Wojcicki
Chief Executive Officer
YouTube

Dear Ms. Wojcicki,

I hope this letter finds you well.

As you know, the proliferation of health misinformation during the pandemic has been both extensive and dangerous. Over the last year I've spoken with health care and public health workers across the country about how health misinformation is harming their ability to care for patients, contributing to burnout, and posing a growing threat to the nation's health. It is clear that we must do everything we can to address this threat. We also owe a debt of action to the doctors, nurses, and public health professionals who have sacrificed so much for us throughout this pandemic.

To this end, my office issued a Surgeon General's Advisory on Health Misinformation in July 2021, calling for action across all sectors of society to address the spread of health misinformation. Given that a large proportion of health misinformation is spread through technology platforms, my Advisory includes a call for technology companies to join this broader effort to create a healthier, safer information environment.

My office is launching an initiative to deepen our understanding of the spread of COVID-19 misinformation, the role the information environment played in societal response to the pandemic, and its implications for future public health emergencies. We are issuing a public *Request for Information (RFI)* to gather and share data and research on health misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the unique role that technology and social media platforms play in the dissemination of critical health information during a public health emergency. We will share what we learn through the RFI directly with the public at surgeongeneral.gov/RFI.

I am writing today to request that your company contribute to the RFI. To date, our collective understanding of the nature of misinformation that is spreading online is incomplete which in turn hinders our nation's ability to implement a robust, effective response. Specifically, I am requesting responses from companies about the extent and spread of COVID-19 misinformation on their technology platforms, policies to address COVID-19 misinformation and their effectiveness, sources of COVID-19 misinformation, and information about the sale of unproven COVID-19 products or services.

I hope that all of us – researchers, companies, members of the health care community, civic leaders, families, and concerned Americans alike – can work together to protect people's right to make decisions about health based on accurate information. I remain confident that through our collective efforts, we can address the harms of health misinformation and safeguard the health of the nation.

Thank you for your cooperation and partnership on this critical public health matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vivek Murthy", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA
Surgeon General of the United States